

Bill Seeking to Increase Involvement of Fathers in the Lives of Their Children Approved in Committee

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A bill sponsored by Senator Milton Potter which seeks to increase the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children was approved in the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services Friday, and will be forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further vetting.

Among the objectives of the bill is to "promote the recognition of the importance of the participation of both parents in the lives of their children," according to a description of the measure.

The bill says "social policy and practices have often focused on the difficulties of raising a child in a single-parent family and have often created barriers to the involvement of both parents in their

child's life." Accordingly, the measure seeks to "promote a social policy and practices that value the contribution that each parent brings to the family unit. The emphasis will be on the population of children whose families have received or are receiving public assistance, but the program will also include other populations of children who will benefit."

If it becomes law, the bill would add an arm within the Dept. of Justice called the Council on Responsible Fatherhood, funded through D.O.J.'s budget. D.O.J. would also be tasked with providing administrative support to the council as well as providing office space for its operations. The original measure sought to create the council under the Dept. of Human Services, however it was changed to the D.O.J. "after extensive engagement with a working group that we put together," according to Mr. Potter.

"Colleagues, all of the experts agree that children with fathers who are engaged in their lives do better, plain and simple," Mr. Potter said when introducing the measure Friday. "They develop healthier relationships, they are less likely to have emotional or physical problems; children who have a strong relationship with their fathers are less likely to use drugs, exhibit violent or anti-social behaviors. They do better academically and are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue higher education, and be successful in their line of employment."

Among a myriad of responsibilities are tasks such as increasing awareness of problems created when a child grows up without the presence of a responsible father; identifying obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of responsible fathers in the lives of their children; and identifying strategies that are successful in overcoming identified obstacles.

See the full measure [here](#).